

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS

WHO MAY COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILIES?

Commanding Officers, and other designated command members, can personally communicate with families. Commanding Officers can also leverage the resources of existing readiness affiliated programs such as Ombudsmen and fleet and family support centers. [OPNAVINST 1754.8, Command Family Readiness Program]

The Command Ombudsman, formally appointed in accordance with OPNAVINST 1750.1g CH-2, Navy Family Ombudsman Program, holds official command status and serves as the Commanding Officer's primary advisor and assistant in ensuring families have the information necessary to meet the challenges of a military life. The command ombudsman can use command recall rosters in the performance of duties to disseminate official family readiness information.

CAN COMMANDING OFFICERS AND DESIGNATED OFFICIALS CONTACT FAMILY MEMBERS WITHOUT CONSENT?

Command authorities may contact family members, with or without the sponsor's consent, when relaying official information directly related to family readiness. [OPNAVINST 1754.8, Command Family Readiness Program]

WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE PROVIDED TO FAMILIES?

Official family readiness information includes information related to support services and social, informational, care-taking, and morale- building activities aimed at enhancing preparedness for the total Navy family community.

For example, Commanding Officers can disseminate unclassified information regarding schedules, command points of contact, location and availability of family service resources, and mustering and accounting procedures for exercises and real-world emergencies.

Commanding Officers can also disseminate information designed to educate Sailors and families concerning the local and military community, military pay and allowances, financial planning, emergency preparedness, and volunteer opportunities with Navy-affiliated support organizations (e.g., Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society). [OPNAVINST 1754.8, Command Family Readiness Program]

CAN FAMILY CONTACT INFORMATION BE PROVIDED TO THE FAMILY READINESS GROUP?

Commanding Officers may not release personal contact information to individuals or agencies, even if officially sponsored by the Navy, including to command sponsored clubs or family readiness groups (FRG). A permissible management practice is for members to indicate as part of the check-in process whether they, or their family member or spouse, consent to the release of family contact information to other officially sponsored organizations to receive information about events and family support programs. To ensure family members are personally aware of the benefits of quick, direct

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communication, the check-in may require evidence of family member notification consent and decision. [OPNAVINST 1754.8, Command Family Readiness Program]

ARE SAILORS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE FAMILY CONTACT INFORMATION?

Per OPNAVINST 3006.1, Personnel Accountability in Conjunction with Catastrophic Events, Sailors are required to update contact information semi-annually in Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System (NFAAS) for both themselves and all family members, including spouses. Command triads have access to this information through NFAAS and can see if spouse information has been updated or not. Triads are able to build a command recall roster out of information provided in NFAAS. This instruction also directs all Navy commands and activities to ensure command ombudsman are familiar with the personnel accountability program and its functions, see enclosure (1), page 2-3, paragraph e.(6).

CAN OMBUDSMAN COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH FAMILIES?

OPNAVINST 1750.1g CH-2, Navy Family Ombudsman Program, pages 11 and 12, under Ombudsman Action Requirements, directs the ombudsman to communicate regularly with family members, contact families upon arrival, establish and maintain an up-to-date and timely telephone tree. This instruction also directs ombudsman to serve as a source of emergency and crisis information and perform other official roles, functions, or duties assigned by the Commander or Commanding Officer, see page 12, paragraph (10).

WHY SHOULD I PROVIDE MY OMBUDSMAN WITH A ROSTER?

OPNAVINST 1750.1G, f. (5) states: Commanders and Commanding Officers shall ensure that the command ombudsman receives a regularly updated command roster to include inbound personnel and families. References (d) (5 U.S.C. 552a) and (g) (SECNAVINST 5211.5E) provide for the release of roster information to the ombudsman without the consent of the individuals listed when the ombudsman is acting in an official capacity.

The ombudsman is a liaison between the command and the command families. The primary role of the ombudsman is that of a source of information and referral. In order to communicate with command families, ombudsmen must have the contact information for those families.

HOW CAN I INSURE THAT THE ROSTER IS UTILIZED PROPERLY?

Commanders and Commanding Officers shall: Accept volunteer services from the ombudsman as an appropriated fund activities volunteer per reference (f) (OPNAVINST 5380.1C) by completing DD 2793 Volunteer Agreement for Appropriated Fund Activities and Non-appropriated Fund Instrumentalities with the ombudsman. OPNAVINST 1750.1G,f.(3)

- By accepting this signed agreement, you are entrusting ombudsmen with the responsibility of handling the command roster.

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- Commanders should establish a procedure and POC for roster updates and delivery, including their preference for storage and disposal methods for current and past copies of roster (e.g., provide roster at Assembly meetings and take the old roster for shredding)
- Ombudsmen receive PII training during ombudsman training and advanced training is available on the Learning Management System to ensure they understand the importance of protecting the information.

CAN THE COMMAND ADJUST THE ROSTER TO FIT THE NEEDS OF THE OMBUDSMAN WHILE PROTECTING PII?

Yes, in order to provide support during a family or command emergency or disseminate official command information the ombudsman needs contact information for service member's family to include the following:

- Name and rank/rate of service member
- Names of spouse and children living with the SM and separately
- Address, phone and email for spouse or designated family member